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BUREAU OF HOME ECONOMICS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

HAT ECONOMY

Many hats, faded, out of shape and out of fashion can be renovated if they are not torn or broken. The first thing to do is to look them over carefully and study their possibilities, at the same time examining pictures of the season's hats in reliable, current fashion books. From such sources it is possible to get a variety of ideas as to correct sizes, shapes, and ways of wearing the new hats. Observe all details closely, for it is only by doing this that renovated hats can be produced without that "home-made look."

Carefully cut off all the trimmings from the hat to be remodeled and try on and experiment with the shape to get an idea of what will be most becoming in an up-to-date style. The hat may then be cleaned, reblocked to the desired shape, trimmed or finished. Some materials such as straws may need to be shellaced and sized to restore their original finish.

Many of the directions given have been taken from books and other publications on cleaning and renovating hats. For these sources see page 4.

RENOVATING HATS

STRAW HATS

CLEANING A closely woven, light-colored straw hat, such as a leg-horn, panama, or milan, can be cleaned by washing with a suds of lukewarm soft water and neutral soap. Dip the hat in the suds and scrub lightly with a soft cloth until it is clean. Then rinse thoroughly to remove all the soap and lay in the shade to drain for a short time before blocking. If the straw is coarse and loosely woven it is safer not to dip the hat in water but to sponge it lightly with a cloth dampened in lukewarm water. Do not use much water or the straw will slip and slide and may even come apart.

If the straw is faded, the color may be improved by covering the hat with a cloth wrung out of 1/2 pint of water to which 1 teaspoon of ammonia has been added. Black straws may be freshened by sponging with a mixture of one part alcohol to three parts of water. (See references 2, 3, 4)

BLEACHING A straw hat that is discolored and sunburned may be improved by bleaching. However, a badly sunburned straw has usually become injured and permanently weakened. Bleaching in that case will only temporarily restore whiteness and will even hasten the weakening of the straw. There are many simple methods of bleaching straw which if carefully carried out greatly improve the appearance of a hat. (See references 1, 2.)

A few methods are as follows:

- (a) Sponge with a solution of cream of tartar and boric acid. Dissolve 2 level teaspoons of boric acid in a pint of warm water and add 3 level tablespoons of cream of tartar. Use the solution cold or lukewarm. Then sponge the hat with clear water and while it is still damp, follow with a solution either of tartaric or oxalic acid (1 ounce of tartaric acid or 1/2 ounce of oxalic acid in a pint of cold water.) Apply the bleach with a sponge and allow to stand on the straw a few minutes. Repeat, if necessary. Sponge thoroughly with clear water and wipe as dry as possible with a soft cotton cloth.
- (b) For another simple bleach for straw hats, add powdered sulphur to ordinary hydrogen peroxide to form a paste the consistency of thick cream. Rub this over the hat, then place it in direct sunlight and allow to dry. When dry, brush well with a soft bristled brush.
- (c) Hydrogen peroxide is often used for bleaching badly discolored panama straws. Scrub the hat clean with a soft cloth moistened with the peroxide. Then rinse thoroughly with clear lukewarm water and lay in the shade to dry.
- (d) A mixture of lemon juice and sulphur (juice of two lemons to 1 level tablespoon of sulphur) rubbed into the straw of a hat will bleach it quickly. Rinse with clear water to remove the sulphur. Lay in the shade to dry.

DYEING

A good quality straw can be dyed successfully but it is not practical to dye a cheap old hat or one of loosely woven straw. Such a hat is apt to fall apart when immersed in the dye bath. Select a dye that will color vegetable fibers or one especially prepared for straw hats and follow all directions carefully.

Straws are sometimes tinted in a waterless dye made by dissolving an oil paint in a dry cleaning solvent. These paints may be purchased in a variety of colors. Different shades are obtained by combining various colors.

Dyes with shellac bases and some of the cold water dyes are applied to straw hats with a brush. They can be used for changing the color of a hat but are better for touching up faded and sunburned places. Shellac dyes also give luster and body to a straw. Finishing with shellac is discussed under Sizing on page 3. (See references 3, 4.)

BLOCKING

The crown of a hat must be shaped over a hat block or mold. One can be purchased from almost any wholesale hat firm or a good form can be made at home at little or no expense. With slight changes the same mold can often be used for hats of other members in the family or can be passed from one to another of a group of women working together on

renovation problems. One method of making a mold is to use a commercial crown of good size and shape as a foundation and cover this with gummed paper tape such as is used in making dress forms. Place two layers of tape on the inside, varnish, and fit a cardboard base into the crown. Then put two layers of tape on the outside and finish with two coats of varnish.

Another way of making a satisfactory mold is with an overturned bowl or a deep saucepan. Select one that is near the depth and head size of your hat crown, pad it well with white cloth until the proper shape and size, then cover with a smooth piece of white material. Old sheeting is suitable. The finished mold should be hard and solid and must measure the correct head size.

Dry straw is stiff and brittle. It breaks and cracks if bent without first softening it with water. Dip the hat in warm water for an instant, let it drain a minute, then carefully stretch over the crown block. In case this straw is loosely woven or only slightly out of shape, it is better to soften the hat by holding to the spout of a steaming tea-kettle. First steam the hat from the inside, then stretch it over the mold and if necessary continue to soften by holding in the steam. Push and mold the straw to shape by hand until it fits smoothly over the block. In order to hold the crown firmly in place, tie a cord around the head-size line, using for this a strong cord with a slip knot in one end. If the tip of the hat pulls away from the block, press it flat with a warm iron. Since straw scorches very easily, cover it first with a dry cloth, then a wet one, and press lightly with a medium warm iron. Be sure to leave the hat on the block until thoroughly dry.

The brim of the hat when softened with water can usually be stretched and molded by hand to the desired shape. It is then pressed on the under side, a section at a time. For convenience in pressing, place the brim on a sleeve board and adjust so there will be no strain or pull at the head-band. Use a dry cloth and wet cloth for pressing and be careful not to scorch the straw,

A block for the brim can be made from pasteboard. First make a paper pattern of the right head size and width of brim and with the correct amount of droop. Then cut one from heavy cardboard and adjust and pad as necessary. To make the block more solid, sew steel hat wire around the head-size line and along the brim edge. Soften the brim of the hat and place it on the mold. Work and push the straw until it conforms to the shape of the block, then pin the straw in place, press lightly, and allow to dry thoroughly before removing from the block.

(See references 3, 4, 5.)

SIZING If, after cleaning and blocking, the straw looks dull and lusterless, brush it over lightly with a thin coat of shellac. Use clear and colorless shellac on light-colored straws, and shellac of matching color on dark colored ones. The shellac must be quite thin and should be diluted about half and half with alcohol. Use a small amount on the brush and rub well into the straw. Let the hat remain on the block until thoroughly dry. Gum arabic solution can be used for sizing

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straws of any color. Dissolve 2 level tablespoons in a cup of boiling water, cool and apply to the hat with a cloth or brush. Use this rather than shellac on leghorns and panamas that have become limp. (See references 2, 3, 4, 5.)

FELT HATS

CLEANING A good quality felt can be washed in water, but dry cleaning in a dry cleaning solvent is usually more satisfactory. Most of such solvents are inflammable and some are explosive. All dry cleaning solvents should be used out of doors away from fires. Carbon tetrachloride is non-inflammable and, from this standpoint, is one of the best dry cleaning solvents to use at home. First, brush the hat well to take off all loose dust, then dip in dry cleaning solvent, brush well with a soft brush, rinse thoroughly in fresh solvent, and dry completely before pressing or reblocking. Several dry cleaning soaps or benzine soaps are on the market and if used in the first washing help to remove the soil.

A white felt is cleaned in the same manner, but while it is still saturated with the solvent, dust over it a thick layer of an absorbent material such as French chalk, powdered magnesia, cornstarch, or white talcum powder. Let the hat lie in a covered box overnight; in the morning shake off the loose powder, let dry, and then brush off the remaining powder. Rubbing the hat with fine sandpaper also improves it. A slightly soiled light-colored felt can be freshened by simply dusting with French chalk or powdered magnesia, rubbing with fine sandpaper, and brushing until smooth. (See references 1, 2, 4, 5.)

BLOCKING A felt must be thoroughly moist before it is ready for blocking. Steam the hat from the inside by holding it over the spout of a steaming teakettle. Then stretch it over the mold, pushing and pulling it into shape until it fits the mold smoothly and snugly. Tie a cord tightly at the head-size line to hold it in place. Continue to steam the felt and push and stretch it until it comes to the desired shape. Do not remove from the block until the felt is thoroughly dry. The brim can be stretched and worked by hand and pressed with a warm iron. Rub the hat lightly with sandpaper and finish by brushing with a soft brush. Begin at the tip of the crown and brush around and around in one direction working outward until the entire surface is smooth. (See references 4, 5.)

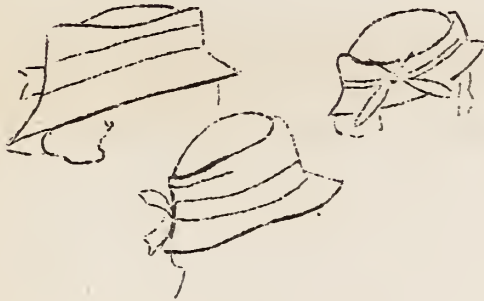
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CROWNS

To lower crowns:

1. Cut off on a line becoming to the individual.
2. Make creases, tucks, or folds.



Crease around entire crown. For coarse or braid straws where the crease needs to be steamed in, cut and use as a mold a strip of cardboard as long as the head size and as wide as the distance between brim line and top fold of crown. Remove cardboard only after the straw is thoroughly dry.



Crease at each side. One fold may be long and deep, the other short and shallow, depending on the effect that proves most becoming.



Pinch a fold across center or side of crown and stitch at base. Leave fold standing upright or press flat, then block crown.

3. Crush. Hold folds in place by tacking them to a strip of ribbon laid inside the crown.



4. Make a new crown top of overlapped grosgrain, or of fabric that matches a coat, dress, or scarf. Fit this over a hat mold or saucepan padded to form the right size and shape.

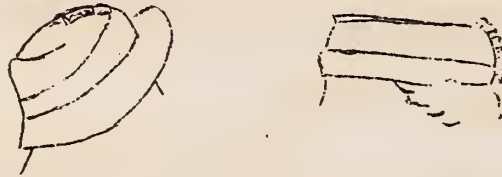


5. Make a new sectional crown, using either fabrics or grosgrain ribbon.



To heighten crowns:

1. Set crown onto a strip of sized fabric of right width. Cover with a ribbon band or other harmonizing material.



2. Reblock one-piece hats, such as felts made of material that stretches or with brims that may be drawn in to form additional crown height. The hat may be fashioned into a turban or have a brim of different material.

BRIMS

To change shapes:

1. Make wide brims narrow by cutting off and refinishing edge.
2. Widen too narrow brims by adding an extension of grosgrain ribbon or a bias fold of harmonizing fabric. These extensions may be wired or not as the particular hat design requires.
3. Reblock a straight brim, making it irregular with slight dips.



4. Drooping brims in felt or smooth straw may sometimes be straightened by stretching, steaming, or pressing.

EDGE FINISHES



Felts may have a plain cut edge. To make this edge, lay the felt on a flat surface and cut with a razor blade at a right angle. For variety, a few rows of machine stitching in self or contrasting color are pleasing on some designs.



Felt and pliable straws that do not break easily may be folded over and stitched by hand or machine.



Straw or felt may be bound with ribbon or fabric. This is especially suited to the brim that requires a wired edge.

LININGS

Linings are simple in modern hats. Whenever the inside appearance or texture of the hat permits, only a headband of smooth silk or grosgrain ribbon is necessary. Old and possibly faded grosgrain bands formerly used on the outside of a hat can be used for this purpose if freshened by washing in a dry cleaning solvent or soap suds. Wrap the ribbon while wet around a glass tumbler and pressing will be unnecessary. If new ribbon or a silk band is used, select a harmonizing color and blind-stitch it into place at the joining of crown and brim. Place seam joining at center back.

If a regular lining is desired, an old one may be freshened by washing it in a dry cleaning solvent and pressing the wrong side. Fit to the hat crown, press fold at a line just below the joining of crown and brim, and blind-stitch into place. Take care in fitting a lining so that it will not show when the hat is on the head.

New materials suitable for hat linings are net, taffeta, or sized cottons of sheer texture such as lawn.

TRIMMING

Study pictures in good fashion books and look at hats in the shops. Countless suggestions will be found for finishing touches on remodeled hats. Simple types of trim are always in good taste, and can be made from a variety of inexpensive materials. The following materials and ways of treating them are suggested:



1. Ribbon. Patent leather, grosgrain, and satin are common types. Plain, striped, or dotted bands finished off with a tailored bow, buckle, or ornament are always neat. Ribbon ends may be cut off diagonally or fringed.



2. Cord. Silk rope, telephone cord, clothesline cord, and other novelty cords in natural or harmonizing colors may be twisted or braided into pleasing effects, and the ends finished off with knots and tassels, wooden beads, and similar ornaments. Through narrow bias folds of material such as taffeta or crepe, cable cord may be pulled, forming a still different type of cord.



3. Leather. This is suitable trim on tailored hats. With it, buckles and metal rings are appropriate finishes. Old leather belts may be utilized. Worn edges may be cut off or if the leather is thin, fold edges to the under side and paste or catch-stitch together.

Three or more narrow strips of soft leather in the same or different colors braided or woven together make a neat hatband.

4. Ornaments. A wide variety of ornamental pins and novelties may be salvaged from old hats, and freshened to look like new. Others may be made from very inexpensive materials.



Buttons, smooth topped or covered, may serve as a fastening for a headband finished off with loops of the same material as the button covering. On each side of a fold they may even be arranged as a side interest.



Tassels of silk or cotton floss are easy to make. Wind thread around cardboard, put a cord through at the top, then slip all of the thread off the cardboard. At right angles to the first threads wind again about $3/8$ " to $1/2$ " from the top. Pull the ends of the cord holding the tassel through the hat, hide it under a button, or form into a circle of cord wound closely together.



Smart effects are gained by cutting quill shaped pieces from felt, oilcloth, leatherette, or firmly woven fabrics and then machine stitching them in self or contrasting thread as illustrated. For a stiffer quill, felt and leatherette may be stitched together. One of these quills placed across the side is all that a street hat needs.

MAKING NEW HATS

TYPES

All kinds of hats cannot be made successfully at home. It is wise to select only the simplest types and designs, for the more complicated a hat is the more likely it is to look home-made. With care and precision in cutting, fitting, and constructing, fabric hats can be made successfully at home. Commercial patterns with directions for making are now available in practically all makes of patterns. Because it is difficult to judge from a pattern or picture whether a hat will be becoming, it is economy to make a muslin or cambric model before cutting new material. Any necessary changes can then be made without waste. If the finished hat is to be of dark material, use dark cambric or similar inexpensive fabric in the model. Muslin, old flour sacking, or parts of worn out garments will serve very well for a trial model of a white or a light-colored hat.

For the type of hats that can be made successfully at home, the following materials are used: Matelasse, crepe, crash, dull satin, pique, and novelty weave.

Knitted and crocheted hats are fashionable now and directions for making a variety of styles in addition to the regular berets can be obtained from commercial companies that make yarn. Ordinary grocery string and the many novelty types of yarn now available offer a pleasing selection for making new hats inexpensively.